FRECKLES

A Sketch

VIOLET M. METHLEY

UNPROFITABLE POULTRY KEEPING

A Sketch

E. M. FOTHERINGHAM

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FRECKLES

A Sketch for Four Girls

BY

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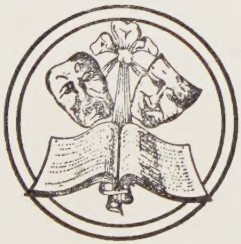
UNPROFITABLE POULTRY-KEEPING

A Sketch for Two Girls

BY

E. M. FOTHERINGHAM

SAMUEL  FRENCH

LONDON

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FRECKLES

CHARACTERS

MARJORIE (*otherwise* FRECKLES, *otherwise* SALAMANDA SAVANNAH).
MISS FELICITY FIELD (*her Godmother*).
DORA, JOAN } (*her Schoolfellows*).

SCENE

A Schoolroom.

DRESS

MARJORIE, DORA and JOAN, school dress, or gym. tunics.
MISS FELICITY FIELD. Very well dressed, in a fur coat, or a pretty summer gown.

It is quite easy to imitate the freckles on MARJORIE'S *face with the aid of a finely-pointed stick of brown grease-paint. But, at the same time, the make-up must not be too heavy or it will look unnatural and ridiculous.*

This sketch may be performed under any circumstances without payment of a royalty.

FRECKLES

SCENE I

The Schoolroom. It is late in the evening and DORA *and* JOAN *are discovered, sitting either at desks, or one on each side of a table, doing their preparation.*

JOAN (*repeating aloud, with her fingers stuffed into her ears*).

Je suis.
Tu es.
Il est.
Nous s——

DORA (*interrupting*). Oh, shut up, Joan! How ever can I learn my history if you babble like that?

JOAN (*taking no notice*).

JE suis.
Tu es.
Il est——

DORA (*putting her hands to her mouth, and shouting*). Be—*quiet!*

JOAN (*taking her fingers out of her ears and speaking in an aggrieved voice*). What's the matter? Why are you roaring at me like that?

DORA. It's you who were roaring! I asked you not to do your verbs out loud at least fifty times, and you took no notice. So I *had* to shout!

JOAN. I never heard you—and I simply can't learn French verbs if I don't say them out loud.

DORA. Well, you must! I *can't* learn if you do, and my history is just as important as your French.

JOAN. I think it's frightfully selfish of you!
DORA. It's you who are selfish!

(*They glare at each other, but are interrupted by* FRECKLES, *who bursts into the room and runs down to the centre in tremendous excitement.*)

FRECKLES. Listen to me! She's coming to-morrow! She's coming to-morrow!
JOAN (*sulkily*). Who?
DORA. *Who's* coming?
FRECKLES. My Godmother, of course!
JOAN. Oh—that wonderful Fairy Godmother of yours!
FRECKLES. You may laugh, but she's just like a fairy! She's simply lovely, and she dresses most beautifully, and she's frightfully rich, and she's a perfect darling——
JOAN. How do you know? You've never seen her since you were a long-clothes baby!
FRECKLES. I've got heaps of photographs of her.
DORA. That's nothing! Look at the photograph you sent her of yourself! It's no more like you than it's like me—why, it doesn't show a single freckle!
FRECKLES (*losing her excitement, and looking terribly sad and disconsolate, sitting down near the others*). Yes, I know. That's the awful part of it—the part that spoils everything.
JOAN. What do you mean?
FRECKLES. My freckles. I'm afraid they'll be such an awful shock to her. I'm sure she won't like me when she sees what I'm like—and I *do so* want her to!
DORA (*kindly*). Oh, I expect it will be all right! Of course, you're not pretty, and you *have got* an awful lot of freckles, but you're *quite* a decent kid.
FRECKLES (*dejectedly*). They make me look so awful. I don't believe anyone could love a person with freckles.
JOAN. Well, you can't help them. She'll have to put up with it, so it's no use fussing.
FRECKLES. I don't want her to put up with it, and

I mean to help them—so there! That's why I've bought this. (*Producing a small flat jar.*)

JOAN and DORA (*leaning over on each side to look*). What is it?

FRECKLES. I saw about it in an advertisement. It's called "Cleopatra Cream." Listen to what it says on the label. (*Reading.*) "This cream will remove all spots, pimples, sunburn, freckles, and all other blemishes of the skin. The cream should be smeared thickly on the face or hands, on retiring to bed at night, and one application will often show most marked results." (*Triumphantly.*) There!

DORA. I don't believe one application will make any difference to your freckles. They're such *fixed ones*, and you've had them all your life, haven't you?

FRECKLES. I don't see why that makes any difference. Anyhow, I'm going to try, and I shall apply it thickly when I go to bed to-night—*very thickly*!

JOAN. If you do, Miss Gedge will see it when she comes to put the lights out, and she'll be certain to tell you to wash it all off at once.

FRECKLES. I shan't put it on until after she's been round—I can easily do it in the dark. Oh, won't it be splendid if all my freckles have disappeared in the morning, or even if they're much fainter? The bottle wouldn't tell lies, would it—it *must be* true, if it says so on the label. (*She gets up and dances round the room, waving the jar over her head, then comes down centre again.*) My Godmother is coming for me in her motor-car very early to-morrow morning—before breakfast. She's asked permission to take me out for the whole day! And we're going to a matinée, and into the Park, and to do some shopping, and have lunch somewhere with a band, and all sorts of lovely things! And it would have been quite, quite spoilt if I'd been thinking all the time how she must hate my freckles!

DORA. You *are* a funny kid!

JOAN. Well, you must come and show us your face in the morning, before you start off in the fairy motor-car! We shall be finishing our prep. here before

breakfast—worse luck. I've not done *half* my verbs!

DORA. And we shall expect to see you with a beautiful pink-and-white skin, like the girls in stories! You mustn't have a single freckle!

FRECKLES (*confidently*). I'm sure I shan't! And I'll ask the maid to bring my Godmother up here when she comes—then you'll be able to see how lovely she is! But promise me, both of you, that you won't call me Freckles before her—I do hate it so! Remember to say Marjorie!

JOAN. Marjorie! (*Doubtfully.*) I'll *try* to remember, but it doesn't seem natural.

DORA. I'd almost forgotten what you were really called, Fr—— I mean Marjorie.

FRECKLES. You *mustn't* forget! And now I'm going to hide away this darling little blessing of a pot of cream on the shelf in my cubicle—ready for to-night!

(*She runs off, laughing.* JOAN *and* DORA *laugh, too, and then settle down to their work again.*)

JOAN (*pushing her fingers into her ears and speaking loudly*).

Je suis.
Tu es——

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The Schoolroom next morning—exactly as in Scene I. DORA *is sitting at desk or table with open book.* JOAN *enters, yawning.*

JOAN. How I do hate getting up in the morning! I'm still as sleepy as an owl! Where's Freckles?

DORA. *Marjorie*, you mean, my dear!

JOAN. Oh, I forgot! (*Laughing.*) Besides, we don't

know if she *is* Marjorie yet, or still Freckles! Hasn't she come down?

DORA. No. I suppose she and the Cleopatra Cream have overslept themselves. You'd better get to work on your verbs.

JOAN (*yawning again and sitting down*). Bother the verbs! Why can't every one speak English—it would be so much simpler?

Je suis.
Tu suis——

No—that's wrong!

(FRECKLES *has entered and stands in the doorway facing her. Her face is very dark tan.*)

Why, Freckles—whatever has happened to you? Dora—look!

DORA (*turning round and staring also*). Freckles—whatever is the matter? What has happened to your face?

FRECKLES (*in a very unsteady voice*). I c-can't get it off. . . . It only gets blacker and blacker and blacker——

(*The two girls meet her.*)

DORA. Is it the Cleopatra Cream?

FRECKLES. No. I waited till after Miss Gedge had gone, and—I took the wrong pot from my shelf in the dark. They were just the same shape. This—this is the stuff I had for darkening my tan shoes!

JOAN. Freckles!

FRECKLES. I rubbed it on thickly—just as the cream said. And—and I didn't know what had happened until the morning. I jumped up in a hurry to see if the fr-freckles had gone, and—and—I found I was like this ——(*Breaking down and sobbing.*) Oh, isn't it awful!

JOAN (*whistles*). I say—what a mess!

DORA. Of course, the stuff for dyeing leather has dyed your face—our skin is a sort of leather, isn't it? And, of course, it's *meant not* to come off, isn't it? It wouldn't be a dye if it washed away easily.

FRECKLES. Do you—do you mean that I've got to

be black always and always? (Oh dear, oh dear—it's worse than freckles even! (*Sitting down by table and burying her face in her hands.*)

JOAN (*encouragingly*). Oh, I should think the dye would wear off, in time—but not very quickly, perhaps.

DORA. And your Godmother will be coming for you in a few minutes! Oh, Freckles—Marjorie, I mean!

FRECKLES. It d-doesn't matter what you call me n-now . . . I'd rather be Freckles than a nigger. . . . Oh, whatever shall I do?

JOAN. I don't see what you *can* do—except tell your Godmother what has happened.

FRECKLES. Oh, I can't do that! Then she'd know all about the freckles, too! Promise—promise that you won't tell her!

DORA. Then what is *going* to happen? Hark! I heard the front door bell. They'll be bringing her up here, directly, as you told them.

FRECKLES (*looking round desperately*). Oh, whatever shall I do? If I try to get away, I shall most likely meet her on the stairs—and, besides, I do so want to see her! But I can't like this—— I know! (*Eagerly and imploringly.*) Pretend that I'm a black girl—a negro Princess, who's been sent to the school! Tell her that my name is—is—Salamanda Savannah.

JOAN. I say—what a lark! I'm game to do it, if Dora is.

DORA. But what are we to say about *you*—about Freck—— Marjorie, I mean?

FRECKLES. Tell her that she can't see me—that I'm ill this morning. It's quite true—I feel simply awful, and she can't see the real me, with this stuff on! Oh, I hear her coming. . . . You will do it, won't you? You won't give me away?

JOAN (*hurriedly*). No, we won't—we'll do it. What a rag!

MISS FIELD (*outside the door*). Oh, yes, I'll go in and introduce myself to my Godchild. She's here, you say—but I'm sure that I shall recognize her.

JOAN. *Will she?*

(*The three look at each other and grin.* FRECKLES *has almost forgotten her troubles in the excitement, for the moment. Enter* MISS FIELD. *She stands in the doorway, smiling, and looks from one girl to the other, then comes forward, farther into the room.*)

MISS FIELD. I don't think that Marjorie is here yet, is she? I am her Godmother, and I've come to take her out for the day.

DORA. Ye-es—we know.

MISS FIELD. I believe that you're Dora, aren't you?

DORA. Yes.

MISS FIELD. Then this must be Joan! I've heard of you so often from Marjorie that I know you well, you see. And this is—— (*Hesitating, as she looks at* FRECKLES.)

DORA. This is Salamanda Savannah——

JOAN (*breaking in as* DORA *hesitates*). Sallie, for short, you know. She's a Negro Princess, really, and she comes from—from Jamaica.

MISS FIELD. I see! She is one of your schoolfellows. Marjorie did not tell me about Sallie.

JOAN. She's only just come, you see. She's an awfully nice girl, really, but she doesn't speak English very well, or understand it either.

MISS FIELD. I see! But where is Marjorie? I asked her to be ready very early, so that we could have a nice long day together.

DORA. Oh, Fre—— I mean, Marjorie. . . . She—she isn't very well this morning.

MISS FIELD. Not well? Oh, I am sorry to hear that! What is the matter?

DORA. Well—it's nothing at all *serious*. She'll be all right again soon, but—I'm afraid she won't be well enough to go out with you this morning.

JOAN. It's—it's something wrong with—with her face—not exactly toothache——

MISS FIELD. Mumps, perhaps!

JOAN. Yes, of course, it *may be* mumps.

MISS FIELD. Oh, poor child! I'll go and see her for

myself, if you will show me the way to her room. (*She turns towards the door, but* DORA *steps in between.*)

DORA. Oh, no! You mustn't go to her. She particularly didn't want you to see her!

JOAN. You see, it *may be* infectious!

MISS FIELD (*laughing*). I'm not the least afraid of that! Old people like myself don't catch mumps! Will one of you show me Marjorie's room?

JOAN (*uneasily and longing to escape*). I—I'll go and ask Fr—Marjorie, first. (*Runs out of the room hastily.*)

DORA (*edging towards the door*). I—I think I'll go too.

(*They both run off. Behind* MISS FIELD'S *back,* FRECKLES *makes a face expressive of disgust at their cowardice, shaking her fist after them.*)

MISS FIELD (*turning to* FRECKLES *and smiling*). Well, it seems that you and I must amuse each other for a few minutes, Princess—Princess Sallie! Can you speak English?

FRECKLES. Me onlee speakee Englishee vellee littlee —vellee badlee.

MISS FIELD. Oh, but you understand what I say, and I'm sure that your schoolfellows will soon help you to learn. Do you know my little Goddaughter—Marjorie?

(*As she speaks, the heads of* DORA *and* JOAN *appear round the edge of the door, one above the other. They are evidently much too curious to stay away, but neither* FRECKLES *nor* MISS FIELD *sees them. They listen excitedly.*)

FRECKLES. Oh, yes! Me know Marjolee vellee wellee. Marjolee vellee nicee girlee.

MISS FIELD. I'm sure she is. That is nice! I wonder if she looks at all the same as she did when I saw her last—when she was a tiny girl. I have been abroad for years and years, so I have only seen her photographs. I suppose she must have changed a lot—then she was such a comical little thing, with freckles all over her face.

FRECKLES (*taken by surprise*). Freckles ?

MISS FIELD. Yes—but I don't suppose you know what I mean. Freckles are little brown spots, made by the sun, you know. Some people laugh at them, but I've always loved freckles, and I do hope Marjorie hasn't lost all hers. She wouldn't be quite the same child to me without them.

JOAN (*too much excited to keep quiet and bursting into the room*). Oh, no, she hasn't lost them—she's got thousands and thousands—that's just the trouble !

DORA (*bursting in after* JOAN). But it doesn't matter, if she *likes* them, Freck—no, Marj—I mean Sallie !

MISS FIELD (*looking from one to the other*). Really, I don't understand——

FRECKLES (*earnestly*). Do you mean you truly don't mind freckles ? Do you really—really like them ? You aren't just saying it to please me ?

MISS FIELD (*still more puzzled*). To please you ? But—yes, I really like them, but I can't see why *you* should be so much excited, Princess Sallie !

FRECKLES. I'm not Sallie——

JOAN (*breaking in*). She isn't a Princess at all——

DORA. She's just—Freckles !

MISS FIELD. Freckles ?

JOAN. Marjorie, I mean——

DORA. Your Godchild !

MISS FIELD. *Marjorie !* But——

JOAN. This black face isn't her real one at all—truly it isn't !

DORA. She put on shoe-dye by mistake, instead of Cleopatra Cream !

FRECKLES (*nearly crying*). It was to—to take away my freckles ; to make myself look nice for—for you——

MISS FIELD. Oh, I understand at last ! So that is what is the matter with your face—not mumps.

FRECKLES (*sobbing*). Yes . . . and I needn't have done it at all if you like the horrid little things ! And now I'm like this, and I can't go out with you, and perhaps—perhaps it will stay dyed always, for ever and ever and ever !

MISS FIELD (*briskly*). Of course it won't! We'll go straight to a chemist, and he'll put on something to take off the dye before we begin to enjoy ourselves! You shall wear my motor-veil till it's all right. Hurry up, darling—I'm just longing to see my old friends the freckles again! And come on, Dora and Joan—you're going with us too!

JOAN. Oh, how lovely! You're really as nice as Freckles said!

DORA. Just like a fairy Godmother! Come on, Freckles!

MISS FIELD (*laughing*). Come on,—Freckles!

FRECKLES. Oh—I love *you to* call me that! I don't mind anything now—even the freckles!

CURTAIN

UNPROFITABLE POULTRY-KEEPING

CHARACTERS

MISS EILEEN SMITH (*a young lady*).
BIDDY (*a maidservant of Irish extraction*).

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UNPROFITABLE POULTRY-KEEPING

SCENE.—*A sitting-room.*

Small table R.C.

EILEEN *discovered sitting at table, pencil in hand, earnestly studying small book.* BIDDY *leaning on table at back, looking at her.*

EILEEN (*looking up with anxious expression*). Yes, Biddy. If only they hatch to-day, I see my way to really making a good profit. It's ridiculous the way people say that poultry-keeping doesn't pay. Why, it's plain as a pike-staff that it does. Just listen now. Twenty-five shillings for the sitting. Thirteen eggs, mind you, Biddy.

BIDDY. Yes. I will be minding it well, Miss Eileen. Thirteen eggs! And setting them on the first day of April! And if that's not tempting Providence, what will be?

EILEEN (*looking at book again*). Average cost of keep of fowl per week, 3*d*. . . . That's thirty-nine pence a week. . . . Three shillings and threepence. This is the first of May. They begin to lay in seven. . . . Let me see. (*Turns over pages of book quickly.*) Yes, that's right. In seven months. (*Counting on fingers.*) May, June, July, August, September, October, November. There! On the first of November I shall have eggs. And that's when they are fivepence-halfpenny each. I suppose a hen lays at least an egg a day.

That's thirteen eggs a day. Seven days in a week. Seven thirteens. . . .

BIDDY (*interrupting*). But, Miss Eileen, you never will be expecting them to lay on the Sunday. Sure a hen will be needing a rest day, no less than a human being.

EILEEN. How ridiculous you are, Biddy! Don't interrupt, for goodness' sake. Seven thirteens are ninety-one. Ninety-one fivepence-halfpennies. . . . Oh dear! I wish I could do mental arithmetic. Where's that piece of paper? (*Seizes piece of paper on table and begins to scribble rapidly, reading aloud at the same time.*) Five ones are five. Five nines are forty-five. (*Pause. Scribbles and crosses out, etc.*) There! That all comes to two pounds one shilling and eightpence-halfpenny. Take away three and three. (*Scribbles again.*) That leaves one pound eighteen shillings and fivepence-halfpenny. How glorious! Nearly two pounds a week for thirteen birds. That's more than a hundred pounds a year.

BIDDY. And why will you be making so sure that they'll be every one pullets, Miss Eileen?

EILEEN (*rather taken aback*). Oh! I hadn't thought about that. I suppose I ought to allow for some being cockerels. (*Pause.*) Do you think there might be TEN pullets, Biddy?

BIDDY. I wouldn't like to be foretelling about it at all, Miss Eileen. Sure, me sister's young man's aunt—very experienced she will be too—she had twelve cockerels from the twelve eggs. And she was after running no risks, Miss Eileen, with putting thirteen eggs to the hen. Never a pullet at all had she. And it will be a good thing for you to be remembering the old proverb, Miss Eileen: "Don't count your chicks at all—let alone pullets—before they hatch."

EILEEN. Oh, Biddy, you *are* depressing. (*In a worried way.*) But of course they're *not* hatched yet. And I can't help thinking they ought to be, taking into account we put the old hen on the eggs on the first of April. (*Consults book again.*) We ought to do something, I'm

sure. Turns over pages, Ah! Here we are. (*Reads.*) "If the chicks do not come off exactly to time, immerse the eggs in a basin of warm water to soften the shells." That's what we must do, of course, Biddy.

BIDDY. And it's a bucket-full of boiling water I have all ready now. I was just after washing the kitchen floor I will be fetching it immediately. (*Exit.*)

EILEEN. I suppose I must take the eggs from under the hen. (*Looking ruefully at hands.*) I do wish the old thing wouldn't peck so. (*Enter* BIDDY *with bucket of steaming water.*) Oh! Biddy dear, you *are* so clever with the hen. Will *you* get the eggs from under her for me?

BIDDY (*putting bucket down in front of table*). I will.

(*Exit.*)

EILEEN. It really *is* worrying. I quite thought everything would be safely over before Mother came back. I wouldn't have borrowed her sewing-machine box to put the hen in, if I had had any idea this was going to happen. I'm beginning to think she won't be pleased about it. (*Picks up book and studies it again. Reads aloud.*) "Hens' eggs—twenty-one days. Ducks' —twenty-eight days." (*Looks up thoughtfully. Re-enter* BIDDY *staggering with sewing-machine box, which she dumps down* L. *front of stage with its door facing back of stage.*)

BIDDY. I've brought the ould hen and her house complete.

EILEEN (*excitedly*). Biddy! It says twenty-eight days for DUCKLINGS.

BIDDY. And will you be expecting ducklings from hens' eggs, if they will be sat on long enough, Miss Eileen?

EILEEN. Oh dear! I don't know what I expect.

(BIDDY *kneels down by box and opens door. Brings out egg and holds it to her ear. Then shakes her head gloomily and hands the egg to* EILEEN.)

EILEEN (*eagerly*). Can you hear anything?

BIDDY. Never a sound.

EILEEN. Let *me* listen. (*Holding egg to her ear.*) Oh, Biddy! I thought I heard a little cheep.

BIDDY. I'm thinking the wish will be father to the thought, Miss Eileen. It's a tap, tapping *I* was listening for. (*Pause.*) We'd better be putting them in the hot water. (*She brings out two more eggs and puts them in the bucket.* EILEEN *puts hers in. They kneel one on each side of the bucket and gaze into it.*)

EILEEN. They ought to bob up and down, the book says, Biddy. The warmth of the water excites the chicks inside the shell, and they kick. That makes the eggs bob.

BIDDY. Never a kick do I see.

EILEEN. That's what the book says. There! Oh, Biddy! Wasn't that a bob? Get another egg or two, Biddy. (BIDDY *does so and they both gaze silently into the bucket.*) Oh dear! What shall I do next? Nothing's happening.

BIDDY. Well, Miss Eileen, you wouldn't be wanting them to hatch in the water. They'd be drowned, the poor little creatures. Unless . . . Is it that you will be expecting ducklings still?

EILEEN (*pettishly*). You really *are* silly, Biddy. Where's the book? (*Takes it off table and reads again.*) No. The next thing to do is to tap them sharply with the edge of a knife. Don't talk nonsense, but get me a knife, Biddy. (*Exit* BIDDY.) Oh dear! I feel rather nervous. I do hope I shan't tap too sharply, and chop off the poor little chick's head. I wish Biddy would do it. (*Enter* BIDDY *with knife.*) Thank you, Biddy. Like this, I think, don't you? (*Gives very gentle tap at egg.*)

BIDDY. You'll never be chipping the shell with that little touch, Miss Eileen. Let me be doing it.

EILEEN (*much relieved*). Very well, Biddy. You can if you like. (*Gives egg to her.*)

BIDDY. This will be the way. (*Gives tremendous cut at middle of egg, breaking it right in half, and disclosing a hard-boiled egg.*)

EILEEN (*aghast*). Biddy! It's a hard-boiled egg.

BIDDY. It is that. (*Pause. Then very solemnly and emphatically.*) Sure and, Miss Eileen, it *will* be hard boiled. It's only this very moment that I've thought of such a thing. It is indeed, Miss Eileen. I should have known it. It *will* be hard boiled.

EILEEN. What *do* you mean, Biddy? Why is it hard boiled? And why should you have known it? How could you?

BIDDY. It's the truth I'm telling you, Miss Eileen . . . if I never speak another word again. And didn't I warn you, Miss Eileen . . . Thirteen eggs I was saying. Thirteen eggs—and set them on All Fools' Day. It's flying straight in the face of nature, it will be. I don't blame myself. I can't be doing it. I will not have been responsible. It will be Fate that followed me, and made me do it. (*Pause.*)

EILEEN. But what *did* you do, Biddy?

BIDDY. Will you be thinking of the day you went up to town, Miss Eileen? It was wash day, you will remember. A cold, wet, raw day, as ever a wash day could be.

EILEEN. Yes, I remember. It was Mother's birthday. The fifth of April.

BIDDY. And you were saying to me, Miss Eileen, "Biddy, will you be seeing to the ould broody for me?" "I will," says I. And I lifted her out of the old sewing-machine box, just as soon as I'd rinsed out me flannels. (*Pause.*)

EILEEN. Yes?

BIDDY. Then, daft-like, the ill-luck o' that thirteen following me, Miss Eileen, I shut the door to of the sewing-machine box, and went back to me washing. And I clean forgot the poor old hen for a good hour. Then she set up such a cackling as would rouse a dead man from his grave. And I remembered what I'd done, and the poor bird unable to get back on her eggs. And will you believe me, Miss Eileen, them eggs was stone cold?

EILEEN. Oh, Biddy!

BIDDY. And I racked me wits as to how I could warm

them up again. Then all of a sudden the washing caught my eye . . . and quick as thought I popped them into the copper. I was about boiling the sheets. "And I'll be keeping them there a good ten minutes," I says to meself. "Then they'll be warmed right through." And I did that same and then put them under the old hen again And it's the truth I'm telling you, Miss Eileen. I've only this minute remembered what the Mistress has told me many a time. Four minutes—a lightly boiled egg. Five minutes—well set. (*Speaking slowly and tragically.*) Ten minutes—HARD BOILED. And they will be hard boiled. Every single one of them.

EILEEN (*despairingly*). Biddy! Oh, Biddy! No wonder the eggs didn't chip.

BIDDY (*gloomily*). No wonder at all.

EILEEN (*almost crying*). Oh, Biddy! And what about the fortune I was going to make out of poultry-keeping. I'm beginning to think it's not so profitable after all. (*Long pause.*) And what in the world are we to do with thirteen hard-boiled eggs?

BIDDY (*cheering up*). We'll be after arranging a picnic . . . (*Eagerly.*) This very minute, Miss Eileen. There's the one egg I've broke. I'll be putting that on the fire. Then there'll be a good honest dozen left . . . to bring you good luck. There's nothing like hard-boiled eggs for a picnic. Be writing notes at once, Miss Eileen, to all your friends.

EILEEN. Biddy!

BIDDY. Yes, Miss Eileen. You'll be finding a pretty spot, down by the river yonder, for your luncheon. And I'll be after plucking and boiling the ould broody at once. All ready and cold, she shall be for you by to-morrow. Hard-boiled eggs and cold chicken! What more could anyone be wishing for?

EILEEN. Really, Biddy! You are the limit. What will you do or say next? It needs the patience of Job to deal with you.

BIDDY. Patience of Job, indeed! And it's my belief, Miss Eileen, that the patience of that good man will have

been greatly overrated. He had his troubles. But didn't he have his friends and relations come havering with him continual ? And if you've got a family party round you, even though they do be telling you you deserve all your troubles, it'll be a deal less monotonous than bearing them all by yourself. Patience of Job, indeed ! (*Turning to audience.*) I thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for the patience with which you've borne with me. (*Speaking quickly but emphatically.*) But will there be anything you can think of at all, to compare with the patience of a poor old Broody Hen, sitting in a sewing-machine box, all alone, on HARD-BOILED EGGS.

CURTAIN

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